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SUBJECT: BELGIUM: WORLD CANCER DAY OBSERVANCES FOCUS ON
CANCER RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH OBESITY

REF: SECSTATE 7680

¶1. (U) Summary: On World Cancer Day, February 4, 2009, a number of Belgian groups raised public awareness of various cancer risks, with a particular focus on obesity. Different activities in Brussels, Antwerp and other locations in Flanders informed Belgians about cancer; Belgium has the highest rate of breast cancer in Europe and the second-highest mortality rates, just behind Denmark, according to a January 2009 European Commission study. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In Brussels, workers and volunteers from the Fondation Contre Le Cancer (Foundation Against Cancer) weighed and measured willing passers-by to calculate each passer-by's Body Mass Index (BMI) to determine whether or not she or he is obese, since obesity raises a person's risk of breast and colon cancer. This project is part of a broader program in Belgium to address the most common risk factors of cancer which, if eliminated, could reduce all instances of cancer by 40%, according to the World Health Organization. Also in Brussels, two authors timed the release of their book to coincide with World Cancer Day. The book tells, largely through photos, the stories of 25 people who have all recovered from cancers diagnosed in their childhood. It also highlights the progress that has been made over the years in combating childhood cancers; the authors hope the book will increase support for adolescent oncology programs.

¶3. (U) In Antwerp, the Antwerp United Against Cancer organization sponsored a 9-hour benefit concert, with proceeds going to the Belgian Cancer Fund. Also, through January and into early February, the Flemish League Against Cancer (VLK) sponsored retreats for cancer patients in each of the five Flemish provinces.

¶4. (U) Finally, Pfizer Inc. and The Pfizer Foundation announced on World Cancer Day the award of a grant to the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer, a Belgium-based NGO, to analyze psychosocial data from 120 oncology clinical trials. The study will be used to develop new measures to assess and address the general quality of life of cancer patients in regards to their respective treatments.

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